

News from Ed Markey

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NEW TERRORIST WARNING EXPOSES RISKY U.S. POLICY ON HAZARDOUS MATERIAL SHIPMENT

Rep. Markey: ‘This Administration has turned a blind eye to critical gaps in hazmat transport security’

Washington, D.C. – This week the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) issued a warning to police that Al Qaeda cells might use fuel trucks as weapons to attack Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago. Responding to this terrorist alert, Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior Democratic Member of the Homeland Security Committee, issued the following statement:

“The Bush Administration has turned a blind eye to critical gaps in hazmat transport security. It has repeatedly opposed efforts to re-route extremely flammable or explosive shipments away from vulnerable terrorist targets even if safer routes existed. How many warnings do we need to take action and create a national hazmat policy that does not leave our cities and towns so vulnerable to attack? Everyday, disastrous mobile bombs travel at top speeds through densely populated communities across the country. It would take very little for terrorists turn these transport shipments into an explosive nightmare that could harm hundreds of thousands of people.

“When Secretary Chertoff testified before the Homeland Security Committee in July, he refused to support the legislation I have proposed to reduce the threat presented by these dangerous materials shipments. This Administration claims it can’t afford to beef up security and re-route the most dangerous materials. The reality is that *we can’t afford not to.*”

Despite a lack of commitment from the Bush Administration to address the security threats of hazardous materials, Democrats continue to push for critical reforms. Representative Edward Markey introduced legislation in March to require the Department of Homeland Security to impose additional security requirements for shipments of extremely hazardous materials, including re-routing of such shipments around areas that raise particular security concerns when a safer route is available.

Rep. Markey’s bill would reduce the threat of hazardous materials to communities across the country by directing the Secretary of DHS to promulgate regulations to:

- Require the Department of Homeland Security to re-route the most dangerous materials (the ones like chlorine that are toxic by inhalation, and highly flammable or explosive materials) around densely populated or other sensitive areas when a safer route is available.
- Increase the physical security measures surrounding shipments of extremely hazardous materials, such as extra security guards and the use of more surveillance technologies.
- Require the use of technologies that could make railcars full of toxic gases such as chlorine more resistant to punctures.
- Require increased coordination between the industry, the law enforcement community and first responders so that emergency personnel are notified before toxic chemicals are transported through their jurisdictions and have response plans in place.
- Require training for employees who work with shipments of these materials.
- Provide whistleblower protections for personnel who report security or safety problems.
- Impose civil and administrative penalties for those who fail to comply with the regulations.

Officials encouraged local authorities to be on alert for attacks but emphasized that the warning, which suggested that terrorists might use fuel tankers to attack three major cities, was based on uncorroborated intelligence. This is not the first warning that the U.S. has received about the threat presented by these soft hazmat targets. In 2003, an Ohio-based Al Qaeda operative was arrested for providing material

support to terrorists in a plot which involved targeting transport infrastructure carrying hazardous materials.

More information on Representative Markey's work to close the existing loopholes in chemical, transport, and hazmat security can be found at <http://www.house.gov/markey/>